

The EU Engagement in Protracted Crises: Towards a Comprehensive Approach?*

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1 This article draws on a study conducted by ECDPM on EU financing instruments for protracted crises, which will be published in Burnay, M.; Hauck, V.; Raube, K. and Deneckere, M. (forthcoming). *Does the EU have the right instruments to finance assistance in enduring crises and the needs of upper middle income countries?* Brussels: European Parliament.

Abstract

Protracted crisis situations often last for years or decades, and derive from a complex mix of factors such as violent conflict, natural disasters, poverty, natural resources scarcity, institutional fragility, political instability, and limited economic opportunity. As they feature both emergency needs and structural vulnerabilities, protracted crises require a comprehensive approach that brings different actors and policy communities together under single political leadership, focusing on a common objective of paving the way to stability, resilience and development. This article addresses the question of whether the European Union (EU) is well positioned to respond comprehensively to such protracted crises. It explores a diversity of EU financing instruments as these are 'enablers' for the EU comprehensive approach, also taking into account the role of EU Member States. In fact, the EU has a wide array of financial instruments and mechanisms available to address protracted crises and to pursue different objectives across short – and longer-term time horizons. However, their comprehensive use is seriously constrained by the fragmentation of EU decision-making, strategic incoherence, and overlapping instrument mandates. EU institutions have made serious efforts to overcome such limitations, including through a harmonization of concepts and strategies. Furthermore, mechanisms for coordination and information exchange at the political and operational levels allow for collaborative responses. However, many of these technical solutions can only bring limited results in the absence of clear political leadership driving EU external action.

Resumo

O Empenhamento da União Europeia em Crises Estruturais: no Caminho de uma Abordagem Abrangente?

Situações de crise estrutural prolongam-se por décadas e resultam de uma combinação de fatores como conflitos violentos, desastres naturais, pobreza, escassez de recursos naturais, fragilidade institucional e limitadas oportunidades econômicas. Estas crises concatenam necessidades urgentes com vulnerabilidades estruturais, requerendo uma abordagem abrangente que reúna diferentes atores e comunidades políticas sob uma única liderança, centrada num objetivo comum promotor da estabilidade, resiliência e desenvolvimento. Este artigo questiona se a União Europeia (UE) se encontra bem posicionada para responder de uma forma holística a crises estruturais, examinando de uma forma detalhada os instrumentos financeiros da UE e considerando o papel específico dos Estados-membros. Nele se observa a presença de um vasto conjunto de instrumentos e mecanismos disponíveis, que permitem à União Europeia gerir uma variedade de desafios associados às crises estruturais e prosseguir uma diversidade de objetivos, em horizontes temporais de curta e longa duração. Contudo, a sua abrangência encontra-se limitada pela fragmentação dos processos de decisão da União, pela sua incoerência estratégica e pela sobreposição de mandatos. As instituições europeias têm desenvolvido sérios esforços para ultrapassar estas limitações, incluindo a harmonização de conceitos e estratégias, de mecanismos de coordenação e a troca de informação ao nível político e operacional, permitindo o desenvolvimento de respostas colaborativas. Porém as soluções técnicas apenas geram resultados limitados, em particular na ausência de uma clara liderança política capaz de orientar a ação externa da União como um todo.